

THE MISERIES OF WAR, AND THE HOPE
OF FINAL AND UNIVERSAL PEACE,

SET FORTH IN

A THANKSGIVING SERMON,

PREACHED AT

COLYTON, in the County of Devon,

July 29th, 1784,

By JOSEPH CORNISH.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

The Earl of SHELBURNE.

MY LORD,

TO you, as the happy means,
under the Divine Providence,
of putting an end to the
late destructive war, are due the
thanks of all true patriots and
lovers of mankind. Let such pray,
that the best blessings of heaven
may descend on your head ; and
that everlasting peace in another
world may be your recompence
for

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for having restored temporal
peace to a very large part of this.
In these prayers most heartily
joins,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's

Unknown, but (as an Englishman
and a Member of Society)

Greatly obliged humble Servant,

Colyton,
Aug. 14th, 1784.

JOS. CORNISH.

A Thanksgiving Sermon.

Isaiah ii, 4.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

NO passage of scripture is better calculated to afford pleasure to a benevolent mind, to a mind which the gospel has transformed into the image of its divine author, than that which I have now read to you. When we consider the great God as the FATHER of all men; when we consider the blessed Jesus as the saviour of all men, we must, if we be indeed the children of the one and the disciples of the other, feel ourselves heartily inclined to love all men.

B

Peace

Peace on earth was proclaimed by angels, when the Son of God came to dwell with it's inhabitants; and peace will reign throughout the earth, when he, which he most certainly will do, *shall have put all enemies under his feet.* The benign principles of his religion, the engaging mildness of his example, that spirit of love which he displayed through the whole of his conduct, living and dying, have softened and subdued the minds of many, and taught those, who had the fury of lions, to put on the meekness of lambs. Revelation also assures us, that there is a time approaching, when the precepts of the gospel shall have a more general influence; when, to adopt the expressive language of the Psalmist, *mercy and truth shall meet together, righteousness and peace shall kiss each other.* Psalm lxxxv, 10.

Words very similar to those in our text, occur in the fourth chapter of the prophecy of Micah, at the third verse. *And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,*

shares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. It is added, verse 5, But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The prophet Isaiah speaks in other places of those peaceable times, with which the world should be blessed under the government of the Messiah. Chap. xi. 6 and following verses, he thus expresses himself. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed: their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. The most savage and brutal natures shall be subdued. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

When Christ shall take to himself his great power and rule and reign, every thought shall be brought in subjection unto him : and when all anger, and malice, and revenge ; when all pride, covetousness, and ambition are banished from the heart, then wars must cease. *From whence come wars and fightings among you ? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members ?* James iv, 1. Wars are always occasioned by some evil and wicked passions, which transform men into brutes, and drive them on to destroy and to devour one another.

That God, who is the author of peace and the lover of concord, hath put it into the hearts of those nations, who were lately at war, to be again reconciled to each other. This is the blessing for which we are now called upon to give thanks, and I hope and trust we are disposed to do it with the sincerest joy. On this occasion, so truly pleasing to the benevolent and humane, it shall be my endeavour, in the first place, to prove that peace is a great blessing, and, secondly,

secondly, to shew what reasons we have cause to hope that the time is approaching when the peace of mankind shall never more be disturbed by war.

First, It is proposed to prove that peace is a great blessing.

It is too well known that many hardly think this a blessing. Many are so elated with what they call a victory, that they forget all the distress and misery it occasions ; and are full of triumph, because death hath made greater havock amongst the people of another nation than their own : for what is a victory, but when ten thousand of the creatures of God meet and cut each others throats ; and only a thousand of one country are murdered, and two or three thousand of another country fall a sacrifice ?

When the just and natural rights of men are invaded or struck at by the tyrannical rulers of another kingdom, and the people are weak or wicked enough to concur with, and to promote the
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vile intentions of their rulers, every lover of mankind must rejoice, if those whom tyrants endeavoured to oppress become victorious in the contest. But when nations are drawn in unwillingly, through the pride and ambition of their respective governors, to make war upon each other without a just cause on either side, detested be the name of victory. It is a word of a fine sound in the ears of many, but

“ To me it talks of ravag’d plains,
 “ And burning towns, and ruin’d swains,
 “ And mangled limbs, and dying groans,
 “ And widows’ tears, and orphans’ moans;
 “ And all that misery’s hand bestows,
 “ To fill the catalogue of human woes*.”

Some live by the distresses which war occasions; but those who can wish for its continuance that they may have an opportunity of selling the instruments of destruction; those who without any reluctance can receive that pay which is the price of blood, are persons of whom the sons of humanity do not love to

* See the whole of this incomparable little ode at the end.

· speak or think. Would it not be in vain to call on them to praise the Lord for his goodness, in making wars to cease?

Were the world too small to contain it's inhabitants, did not the earth produce enough for the support of those who dwell on the face of it, there would be some plausible reason to be alledged in defence of wars, which make such havock and destruction amongst the human race. But since the earth, if properly cultivated, and the more mankind encreases the better it will be cultivated, could support ten times and twice ten times the number of rational creatures it now does, is it not a shocking thought that men should ever be prevailed upon, by their wicked passions, to destroy one another?

There is nothing however so bad which some or other will not justify. In defence of war it hath been alledged, that it is one mean of removing numberless idle and profligate persons who are injurious to the community. But
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let it be remembered, that all are not killed who go into the army ; and hardly any one will affirm that the army is a place, where men are known to grow more sober and virtuous by living in it. If only the pests of society fell in battle, those of whose reformation hardly a hope remained, their fate would not call for much regret. But alas ! those whose lives are most desirable are as much exposed to be cut off by the sword as the most worthless. It is also a matter greatly to be lamented, that so many vile wretches enter into our fleets and armies, because they spread corruption through the whole. Yet if war should be the means of destroying some bad men, to defend it, on that ground, as being useful and necessary, must arise from a great degree of inattention to the innumerable calamities with which it is accompanied.

To read the accounts of countries invaded, of villages burnt, of cities plundered ; of those who are worn out with age or sickness, or of innocent babes unable to help themselves, turned out
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of their habitations, exposed to an inclement sky and all the miseries of cold and famine: to read of thousands cut off in an hour, in the strength and vigour of life, cut off from every pleasing and agreeable prospect, when they might have been the instruments, had they lived, of bringing into existence, none can say how many reasonable and immortal creatures, made after the image of God; cut off with the guilt of all their sins upon their heads, from every opportunity of amendment; and from all possibility of reformation: to read and think of these things is shocking: humanity shudders at the relation, and must detest the very name of war. And if only to read and think of them be shocking, what must those feel who are spectators of such scenes of woe; who are themselves the unhappy victims of cruel, bloody ambition? What an alarm does the cry of fire spread, how much are those pitied who suffer by it, even if it be but one family only, to whom many friendly doors are open? What then must be their distresses who see, not their own habitation only, who

see every neighbouring house in flames ; not one left to which they may fly for refuge, and who, if they escape from the city, are devoured by the sword or by famine.

How many dutiful and affectionate sons, kind and indulgent fathers, tender and fond husbands did the last (it sounds harsh to say accursed) did the last ever-to-be-lamented, war tear from the bosoms of all those to whom they were lovely and whom they loved, and send them by violence to their long home. One fatal day of battle will make sad destruction amongst the men, who, in the course of nature, might have proved blessings to their relatives, and rejoiced the hearts of their connections for years to come. And much cause is there to weep over numbers whom death hath spared, to drag out a miserable existence, with mangled limbs, incurable disorders, and ruined fortunes.

Those also, who remain quiet in their habitations and ardently wish for peace, must frequently trust their property to
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the ocean, where the fruits of years of care and industry often become, in an instant, the prey of barbarous ruffians; who have never had a thought or a desire of avenging their country's wrongs, but go out armed with the weapons of destruction to plunder whatever may come in their way. Whilst the news of a victory gladdens many hearts, the brave soldiers and seamen, who were perhaps the most instrumental in obtaining it, lie bleeding, groaning, and languishing in sickly hospitals, rotting on a foreign shore, or a prey to the monsters of the briny deep; the dearest objects of their affections weeping and lamenting in vain for brothers, for sons, for fathers, and for husbands lost.

Blessed, blessed be God, that though for our crimes we deserved it, yet the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war was not heard within our own borders. The frantic sons of violence did, indeed, for a few days, spread terror and dismay, through our metropolis, where their fury was soon suppressed. Most devoutly is it to be wished, that the spirit

of unchristian zeal, which first excited it, were effectually suppressed also in the breast of every individual; and that however protestants may detest popery, (that detestable system,) they would consider papists as their fellow creatures. Our foreign enemies, though they appeared very near our coasts, did not attack us on shore; and the calamities, we have been describing, raged at a distance from our native land. Are no evils, however, to be deplored, but those in which we bear an immediate part? No blessings to be acknowledged, unless it be those which immediately affect ourselves? We have, I trust, more humanity, more benevolence; and shall all be ready thankfully to adore the God of peace, who hath reconciled the contending nations.

The war was first commenced against those whom we used to regard, and who, with as much affection as can subsist between the members of countries so distant, regarded us as brethren. Two powerful nations joined them in the contest, and at last another people, with whom

whom we had been often allied, to our mutual advantages, leagued with our enemies, and fought against us. That we were so well supported under, and carried through, such a contest is amazing. That we could much longer have supported it, rashness only will affirm. The events of war are very uncertain. One day brings the news of a victory; the next of a defeat. Now the devouring sword is sheathed; and the men that love their fellow creatures will surely be ready to praise the Lord for his goodness in putting a stop to evils so dreadful.

The more effectually to relieve our minds from the gloom, in which the foregoing considerations are calculated to involve them, Let us proceed,

Secondly, To consider what causes we have to hope, that a time is to come, when the peace of mankind shall never more be disturbed by war.

It is sufficient for christians to be told that God has declared it. *Thus saith the*
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the Lord, is enough to satisfy the true believer. Divines may dispute, and philosophers may argue, but the arguments of all the divines and philosophers in the world will have no weight with him, if they appear on a serious examination to be contrary to the plain and clear meaning of the written word. Now it is declared in the scriptures of truth, *The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.* Isaiah xi, 9. Hab. vii, 14. *From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.* Mal. ii, 11. The Almighty promised to Abraham. *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* Gen. xxii, 18. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made, he saith not, and to seeds as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed which is Christ. Gal. iii, 16. The seventy-second psalm has always been interpreted as having a reference to the Messiah's kingdom, and
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is quite agreeable to the descriptions given of it in various parts of the prophetic writings. The angels proclaimed *on earth peace, good will toward men*, at our Saviour's birth; and he himself declared, *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.* John xii, 31.

From these passages it is clear that the principles and doctrines of christianity shall universally prevail. When this is the case, wars must cease; for they can never arise, unless from the ascendancy of such passions, either in one party or the other, or both, as are quite inconsistent with the christian character.

That every individual will be influenced by gospel motives, is perhaps more than these texts affirm. That the generality will, they plainly intimate; and when a considerable majority is engaged on the side of goodness, its adversaries will be soon abashed, and rendered incapable of exciting any very alarming disturbances.

Our

Our blessed Saviour, indeed, says, *Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace but a sword.* Mat. x, 34. The earth, however, in this text, according to the opinion of the best commentators*, does not mean the world in general, but rather the land of Judea, as it does in some other places†. The bitter enmity of the jews, against all who received the gospel, occasioned much cruelty and bloodshed. Their public rejection of the Messiah, the hope of Israel, and their barbarous treatment of him, to whom Moses and all the prophets bore witness, exposed them to the fierce anger of Jehovah, who sent the Roman sword into their land, and made all their country a desolation. Religious disputes have also in other parts of the world caused the sword to be drawn, but this was far from being the design, though it was in some instances the consequence of Christ's coming. God gives us corn and wine for the support and comfort of life, but if any abuse

* See Whitby and Doddridge in loc.

† Mat. xxiii, 35. Luke iv, 25.

his blessings to excess, shall we be so daringly impious as to reflect on him as the cause? The doctrines of Jesus are calculated to promote the happiness of every individual amongst the human race. If their purity and excellence have prejudiced the wicked against them, and excited their worst passions, shall we charge these abuses on its divine author?

Persecutions have arisen, much blood hath been spilt, and whole nations stirred up one against another; but Jesus is not the less amiable; nor his religion the less worthy of all acceptance, on account of the wickedness of those who have opposed it, or who call him their lord and master, yet never acquaint themselves with, or endeavour to conform, to his instructions. The outward professions of all such the gospel discountenances and abhors; and when Christ shall appear to judge the world in righteousness, he will declare unto them, *I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* Mat. vii, 23.

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No!

No! whatever may in some cases have been the consequence, the design of our Lord's coming was of the most benevolent nature. We are assured also that, in his days, when he shall have established that kingdom, which he hath set up, *the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth*; (Psalm lxxii, 7.) and, in the words of our text, *nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

But however full and compleat the satisfaction may be, which the word of God affords us on this head, there can be no impropriety in advancing such reasons as might even independently of that lead us to hope; that the nations of the earth will in time grow wiser than to bite and devour one another: the certain consequences of which is to be consumed one of another.

First, nations find by experience that much is to be lost, and little to be gotten, by war.

Ambitious

Ambitious princes have often spread desolation through the globe, for the sake of adding to territories too extensive of themselves to be well governed. The people, under a mad desire of advancing the honour (as it is termed) of their princes, have assisted their designs, and with all the rage of furies fallen upon their quiet and innocent neighbours.

But it has often happened, that those who have endeavoured to enlarge their dominions, have lost much, and sometimes all of what they before possessed; or when they have gained their point, gained it with an immense loss of blood and treasure, accompanied with repeated disappointments and vexations; or almost as soon as they have reached the summit of glory, have fallen themselves a sacrifice to death, which in an instant puts a stop to all the gloomy triumph of the savage conqueror. From these considerations, even the proud and ambitious, who are a little conversant with history, must feel some check. Motives of policy may induce them to

decline attempting what the love of power might suggest, when motives of humanity would have no weight. Not to go abroad, our own history furnishes us with sufficient proofs of the folly of going to war, for the sake of adding to our dominions.

For more than five hundred years, our ancestors were almost perpetually at variance with Scotland, and millions of lives from first to last were lost in repeated battles, and in consequence of the desolate state in which a considerable part of both the kingdoms constantly lay. To subdue that country proved a vain attempt, though it was never quite given up, till their king, James I. succeeded to the throne of England, and thus a union was accomplished, much for the happiness of both. Repeated also were the attempts of our former kings to become monarchs of France, and much of what has been falsely stiled glory some of them acquired. Henry V. succeeded so far as to be crowned at Paris; but all that he gained was soon taken away, the nation was greatly impoverished,

poverished, and at length our kings lost all which they possessed in France, as their natural right, by endeavouring to conquer the whole. To think of the last war is so apt to produce anger and indignation, that it is better not to dwell on it. What our then ministers professed to aim at getting, was a trifle, or nothing: what we have lost, we know, and long, long posterity must feel.

Indeed so few, so very few are the instances, in which any nations have been benefited by war, even for a short period, excepting those which have been forced to stand up in defence of their natural rights, that there is some reason to hope and to believe, that the sword will not be so frequently drawn as heretofore. The little that is to be gotten, even by a successful war, will render men less eager to enter upon it, since success must in the outset be doubtful.

Secondly, Religion used to be made a pretence for stirring up men to cut one another's throats; but this mad frenzy has lost much of its power,

This

This is an age of luxury and dissipation ; so few think about religion at all, that some good men have feared, lest the ignorance about it, which is so very prevalent, should end in gross superstition : and the superstitious are prone to contend, in a bloody manner, for their foolish notions. It is, however, certain, that the most enlightened minds, in this and most other countries of Europe, are convinced of the reasonableness and utility of an extensive toleration. It is an opinion, widely diffused amongst all ranks and orders, that every man should chuse and follow his own mode of worship, and that it is unjust and cruel to molest any one on this account. Differences in religion were formerly the cause of mutual hatred between nation and nation. Men were made to believe they did God service, by destroying all those who served him in a different manner from that to which they had been accustomed. Sentiments so contrary to reason, so opposite to the spirit of the meek and compassionate Jesus, seem to be daily losing their influence. Were there not some ground
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to believe, that God will always reserve unto himself a peculiar people, sanctified by the working of the blessed spirit on their hearts, there would be more cause to apprehend, that in a little while religion would be quite lost, than that men would go to war about it. The inflammatory discourses of enraged bigots may as yet excite a temporary spirit of persecution in a mob; but it may be hoped, never more in nations as a collective body.

Thirdly, The enlargement of trade and commerce is less likely than formerly to be the occasion of war.

The body politic is now become so enlightened as to begin to see, that the less trade is restrained, the more it is likely to flourish. If the people of any nation be sober and industrious, should they be cut out of any branch of trade by the ingenuity of their neighbours, they can apply their skill to other objects, and make amends for the loss. Lands every where begin to be better cultivated; and since Spain, and France,
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and Great-Britain, and almost every country throughout the globe could support some twice, and some ten times the number of the present inhabitants, nations will be less disposed to quarrel about a few articles of trade. The expences of war are found by experience to be so great, as instead of promoting it's increase, in many instances to prove it's destruction.

And if more may be lost by war than is to be gained by trade; if princes instead of adding to their dominions are as likely to lose what they had before; if men are less and less disposed to draw their swords in religious quarrels; which three have been the grand causes of strife amongst nations: if things be so, there is room to hope, that as wars have in general of late been carried on with less cruelty than formerly, owing to the prevalence of humane sentiments, so they will be less frequent; and that the time is approaching, when *the sound of the trumpet*, and the alarm of war, will be heard no more throughout the earth.

If

If any foreign nation should attempt to deprive us of our just rights, we ought with spirit to defend them ; and, if forced to draw the sword, may, with devout humility, beseech God to favour our righteous cause. However it is at all times the duty of every individual, to promote, as far as his influence will extend, those principles of mildness, forbearance, and universal good will, which the blessed Jesus hath set before us in his gospel. The more a *meek and quiet spirit, that ornament which is in the sight of God of great price*, (1 Pet. iii, 4.) is cultivated in private, the more uniformly will the peace and happiness of the world be maintained. God *hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth*. Acts xvii, 26. They should not, therefore, endeavour to exterminate one another ; but, being the children of one father, should all love as brethren.

It has been common to stile the French *our* natural enemies. *They* may stile us *theirs*, with just as much reason ; and whilst such language is made use of,

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enmity and rancour will be kept up. But why should two kingdoms be at perpetual war, merely because they lie near each other? For the same reason, neighbouring counties, towns, and families, should be in a constant state of hostility. Reason points out a different conduct. The nearest neighbours ought to be the best friends. The world is large enough both for us and for them, and they are the creatures of God equally with ourselves. Twice in the space of seventy years this nation has been allied with France, to check the ambition of some other powers*. If we make no more alliances, God forbid that we should have any more bloody contests.

Happy will it be for both nations, and for all nations, if this day of thanksgiving should be employed in promoting a desire of being at peace with all the world. The archbishop of Paris has in his form of thanksgiving afforded us an excellent model. It breathes a

* In the years 1715, 1716, and 1725.

spirit which every lover of mankind must wish to see become general*.

Christianity forbids us to curse, or one might be tempted to say, "Curfed be those, whoever they are, whether of this or any other nation, who shall again endeavour to plunge us into a war." Bless, however, we may, and I trust we can, with all our hearts and souls, pronounce, "Blessed, blessed be all those, who shall endeavour inviolably to preserve that peace which God hath graciously restored." Never, never may it be interrupted, but now may the glorious period commence, when men *shall*

* The following are the concluding lines. "O! that the happy peace, which we now celebrate, may never hereafter be disturbed! O! that it may extinguish for all eternity that fatal rivalry, which in every age has cost so many tears, and so much bloodshed, to two nations which entertain a mutual regard for each other! O! that it may be succeeded by a noble emulation between two nations so capable of bringing arts and sciences to perfection, and of extending the boundaries of human knowledge, if they would but banish from their minds that false science, and that proud philosophy, which, instead of enlightening mankind, obscures all truths, and reverses every principle! O! that France and England could be for ever united, for the glory of Europe, and for the good of the universe!"

beat

*beat their swords into plow-shares, and
their spears into pruning hooks: nation
shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.
Amen. So come, Lord Jesus.*

The D R U M.

(From Mr. SCOTT'S* Poetical Works.)

I Hate that drum's discordant sound,
Parading round, and round, and round:
To thoughtless youth it pleasure yields,
And lures from cities, and from fields,
To sell their liberty for charms
Of tawdry lace and glittering arms;
And when ambition's voice commands,
To march, and fight, and fall in foreign lands:
I hate that drum's discordant sound,
Parading round, and round, and round:
To me it talks of ravag'd plains,
And burning towns, and ruin'd swains,
And mangled limbs, and dying groans,
And widows' tears, and orphans' moans;
And all that misery's hand bestows,
To fill the catalogue of human woes.

* Of Amwell, in Hertfordshire, lately deceased, whose admired productions were, in the year 1782, published in one volume. He was by profession a quaker, the sentiments of which denomination of christians are well known to be friendly to the interests of humanity.

F I N I S.



